

# The Pittsylvania Packet



No. 1

Pittsylvania Historical Society

## FOR DISTINGUISHED SERVICE:

The essential PAYNES, NEIL and LUCILLE, have earned a prominent niche in Society history for their many years of unselfish service. Through the use of their many talents and limitless energy they helped keep the organization afloat for a decade or more as leaders, officers and publishers. More importantly, the publication, QUILL PEN, was their creation and as such contributed an incalculable amount toward the growth of the Society through the Eighties. They have earned a rest and our hearty thanks and "WELL DONE" go with them.

On behalf of every member of the Society, the PACKET says "We will miss having you as Treasurer" She has been "Mrs. Historical Society" for more than eighteen years as our first and continuous Treasurer. CATHERINE OVERBEY served those eighteen years with a remarkable competence and dedication that made the Society a much stronger organization. We are in her debt and must face the painful fact that no organization can replace leaders of her stature.

## SUCCESSOR TO THE QUILL PEN

While the PAYNES and THE QUILL PEN cannot be replaced, this first issue of THE PITTSYLVANIA PACKET is being circulated to keep alive the spirit THE QUILL PEN instilled in Society members. The interim Editor (hereinafter referred to as INTERIM) is publishing this issue only. A more competent Editor for future issues will be forthcoming.

An attempt was made in this issue to continue those essential sections such as QUERIES and ITEMS OF INTEREST that appeared regularly in the QUILL PEN. In this first issue is a section on COUNTY COURT ORDERS dating back to 1767 and a specimen of EARLY LAND GRANTS dating back to 1740. Future issues could include interesting excerpts from the early LAND BOOKS - an example of which appears in this issue.

These are trial balloons for the future Editor <sup>3</sup> who will appreciate your suggestions. Meanwhile, INTERIM asks for your patience, indulgence and suggestions during this difficult time.

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## CHANGE OF COMMAND

The Society's nominating committee will make its report at the August 19 meeting.



### THE COVER

So that Society members will understand the intended message of the cover, INTERIM offers the following explanation:

He pondered possible names for the new publication for two fruitless months. Upon his request for suggestions for a name that would include the word "Pittsylvania" from Society President, Henry Mitchell, the resourceful Mitchell studied intently for a few seconds and replied: "The only thing I can come up with is "Pittsylvania Packet." INTERIM had what he wanted. The name will certainly suffice until the permanent Editor, the membership or the officers express a preference.

It is our understanding that riders and coachmen, who carried the mail in the early days, had leather packets (or pouches) for each post office. Upon arrival at each location they exchanged the incoming packets for outgoing ones. This kept communication alive. The PACKET'S intent is to keep communication alive.

- 4 The background on the cover is the Boye-Bucholtz 1827 Map of Pittsylvania County. The August, 1802 postal stamp postmarked "PITTSYLVANIA C.H." (to the right) comes from a letter sealed by attorney Langhorne Scruggs of the county seat and addressed to John Brodnax of Cascade. Brodnax was seeking a clear title to David Rice's Mill and a large tract of land on Mountain Run. This was land Rice purchased from the famous Morehead family a few years earlier. The tract and its mill eventually became a part of Samuel Pannill Wilson's "Windsor Farms." This explains the document's presence in the SAMUEL PANNILL WILSON PAPERS, a portion of which have been donated to the Society. This specimen could be the oldest county postmark extant. The PACKET welcomes a correction on this supposition if in error. The acquisition of the valuable document is explained elsewhere in this issue of THE PACKET.
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#### COMING EVENTS FOR YOUR CALENDAR



THE CALLANDS AUTUMN POTPOURRI Sat. October 5  
The faithful Chairman, Mack Doss, needs your help and presence at this remarkable festival. It is one of Virginia's finest.



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CHRISTMAS IN COLONIAL CHATHAM Sat., Dec. 7  
The Society will again sponsor this event. Chairman Garland Turner and crew are at work planning for  
(A) A tour of 'Chatham Homes,  
(B) Costumed "Street People" portraying historic Pittsylvanians,  
(C) Craft and Antique Shows,  
(D) The traditional Lantern Lighting for the opening of the Christmas season in Colonial Chatham. All out of county members are urged to come home that weekend.

All descendants of HARMON COOK should be pleased. The PACKET is proud to report that a significant restoration project is underway on County Route 783 not far from the confluence of Fye, Crooked and Tomahawk Creeks in Pittsylvania County. The historically important HARMON COOK home (ca. 1780) has been purchased by a couple of North Carolina transplants - Mr. and Mrs. RICI STROUD. They are skillfully endeavoring to restore the old log structure to its original state. The efforts of the Strouds serve to remind us that the home was erected by COOK who led a band of fellow German immigrants from Pennsylvania down the Valley to settle in Pittsylvania County in the 1700s. The intrepid COOK (or Kook) became a prominent Pittsylvanian and one of the county's largest landowners. (See page 87, EIGHTEENTH CENTURY LANDMARKS OF PITTSYLVANIA COUNTY, 1967, by Frances Hurt and Madalene Fitzgerald). He built a grist mill on Tomahawk Creek and bought another on Turkey Cock Creek from George Jefferson (an uncle of Thomas). (See pages 90-92, PITTSYLVANIA'S EIGHTEENTH CENTURY GRIST MILLS, 1989, by Herman Melton). The resourceful Cook successfully petitioned the General Assembly to build a city - COOKSBURG at a busy crossroad on his plantation. A reproduction of the original petition which is on file in the archives of the Virginia State Library is included in this issue of the PACKET.

The PACKET welcomes the RICI STROUDS into the area and wishes them well in this laudable endeavor.

## Hear Ye All!

HISTORIC YEATTS TAVERN, located just south of the Town of Gretna is to be the site of the SUMMER MEETING on AUGUST 19, at 7:30 P.M. ESTELLE IRONMONGER TYLER will autograph copies of her important new book: THE JUNCTION ELBA - GRETN, VIRGINIA. The Society is proud of ESTELLE and urges all members to be present to participate in a tribute to her.



## HISTORICAL WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

For any member or history buff wishing to embark on a challenging history project, the PACKET recommends research into the fate of the lost City of Cooksburg - mentioned elsewhere in this issue. Did Cook sell any lots? Were any homes built? What was the precise location of the fifty acre tract that Cook set aside for the town? Did he transfer ownership of the tract to the appointed trustees?

Retirees! This sounds potentially very rewarding!

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## A PITTSYLVANIA INSTITUTION

They served as retail outlets for families on hundreds of Pittsylvania farms and plantations. They became commodity exchanges, voting precincts, courtrooms, post offices and community meeting places for a century and a half. They were landmarks that lent their names to roads and communities while serving as meccas for schools and churches. Sam Callands had one of the first country store and it eventually became the site of the county seat. His store and those that followed became centers of political activity. Politicians sought the favor of store owners who always became the most powerful citizens in their communities at election time.

Their numbers continue to dwindle and at the present rate of attrition, there will be almost none around by the end of the century.

Pittsylvania County historians have recorded the founding of the county, its participation in both the Revolutionary and Civil Wars, its landmarks, its early families, homes, schools, industry, survey books, parish vestry books and its deed, court order, and entry books. The missing element is a history of PITTSYLVANIA'S COUNTRY STORES. Former store owners are waiting to be interviewed as are scores of their former customers. County record books abound in references to them and a few of their ledgers are extant. Thanks to the efforts of Neil and Lucille Payne, the QUILL PEN published the names of nearly 200 of these country stores from documents among the papers of the late Dr. H.V. Fitzgerald. This represents a "piece of cake" for a history

buff. A rewarding task awaits some retiree who wishes to postpone senility while pursuing the histories of PITTSYLVANIA'S COUNTRY STORES. What a way to do something for your county!! You can do it! Think about it!!

Cascade, Va. Dec 26 1882

*T. L. & S. M. Millner*



**T. L. & S. M. MILLNER,**  
DEALERS IN  
General Merchandise, Boots, Shoes,  
GROCERIES, &c.  
Produce taken at Highest Market Prices.

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SPECIMEN FROM SAMUEL PANILL WILSON'S PAPERS

Business was booming in the Village of Cascade in Pittsylvania County where T. L. and S. M. Millner operated a general store. From a modern perspective, prices were especially good. One could get three ounces of cream of tartar for twenty-five cents. A gallon of kerosene cost twenty cents to burn in a lamp with glass chimneys. The chimneys could be bought for twenty-five cents also. A live fryer cost 16-2/3 cents per pound and a flour sifter cost twenty cents at Millner's where baking soda cost a nickel a pound.

These items were among those purchased by Sam Wilson of Windsor Farms in August of 1882. The above invoice is a part of a collection acquired by the Society through the generosity of Mrs. Joseph Motley Whitehead, a great granddaughter of Samuel Pannill Wilson. Mrs. Whitehead donated a representative portion of the items in the Wilson Collection to the Society. The remaining eight hundred plus historical items were donated to Alderman Library at the University of Virginia. This collection offers unique insight into the operation of a large plantation during the Civil War and the Reconstruction that followed. They are in easy access at UVA. The PACKET extends its heartfelt thanks to Mrs. Whitehead for her efforts in the preservation of Pittsylvania County history.







# QUESTIONS

Parents of MARY (POLLY) WITCHER; b. 21 July 1794 Coke Co. In; m. MERIDITH COOPER 16 June 1813 Smith Co. In. Could MARY'S father be JAMES WITCHER SR., b. ca. 1750 in Va.; d. 1834 Smith Co. In. with Rev. War Pension 82024? Could James Sr. be son of Capt. William Witcher of Pittsylvania? W.D. BUCHANAN, 119 E Angel Drive Waterbury Ct. 06708.

HENRY CLARK birth date, parents, location of his "Plantation." Had 8 children by wife ANNE (?) & by CASSANDRA PHILPOTT (ca. 1801). He died Jan. 1826 in Henry County Va. KAY CLARK 235 Hillendale Drive Greenwood, IN. 46142

Who were the parents and siblings of late-1700 Pittsylvania residents GILBERT BURNETT and his wife PEGGY CUNNINGHAM? Also further information wanted about their children: POLLY, NANCY, HENRY, PATSY (MARTHA?), THOMAS, GEORGE, PEGGY (MARGARET?), GILBERT and JAMES. WOODFORD R. BURNETT, 24 South 75th Street Belleville, IL 62223

## GERMAN ANCESTORS ANYONE?

HANS-JOACHIM HINNERS writes that he performs professional genealogical research in the northern region of Germany and especially around Bremerhaven. Hans is a Secretary at the Bremerhaven courthouse and knows the way around there of course. It was from this main migration port that most German emigrants departed for the U.S. Hans has access to parish yearbooks, births, marriages, etc. from churches in more than 75 German villages. Most date back to the 17th Century. Interested? Write: HANS JOACHIM HINNERS Wurster Strasse 330b W-2850 Bremerhaven Norddeuvarnden Germany

PETITION OF HARMON COOK TO VIRGINIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY OCTOBER 28, 1718

To the Honourable the Speaker & Gentlemen of  
the House of Delegates

The Petitioner of Harmon Cook humbly  
sheweth, That Petitioner is Owner of a large Tract of land in the  
County of Pennsylvania Fifty acres of which land he hath this  
of for a Town at the Fork Roads in the said County leading on  
from Lancaster into Pennsylvania & Harrisburg and as there  
are many Tradesmen already settled in the said Town your  
Petitioner prays that the said Town may be established by an  
Act of Assembly and your Petitioner will ever pray.

## FROM THE BOOK OF ESTRAYS

ROBERT MARTIN

We the subscribers have valued as follows - the Brindled Stear to Two pounds five shs. & the red pided Stear to three pounds Given under my hand this 24th Day of September 1777

Allen ADAMS  
Edmd FITZGERALD  
Edmd PAYNE

ROBERT FARGUSON

Taken up by the Subscriber living on Flyble Creek a Black Horse with hanging mane & Switch Tail, has a blaze face & his right eye is Glassy some Saddle Spots & a lump on his back, both hind feet white & paces naturally about Seven years old last Spring & about four feet six inches high  
Given 23d 1777

ROBT. FARGUSON

We the Subscribers Sworn before William TODD a Justice of the peace do appraise above Stray horse to Ten pounds Current Money

Joshua STONE  
Jno BUCKLEY  
Jno. VAUGHAN

STEPHEN TERRY

Taken up on Barster River one Dark Brindled Bull abt two years old last Spring marked with Crop & hole in left ear posted & appraised to three pounds the Owner May have him as the Law directs

STEPHEN TERRY

I do Certify that above Stray Bull was appraised to Three pounds by Mesheck TURNER, Henry BLANKS & Jno. WATKINS Given under my hand this Twenty first Day of October 1777.

STEPHEN COLEMAN

*Abstract of the Lands Tax due in the County of Pennsylvania for the Year 1797.*

Persons Named Owning Lands	No. of Acres	Lotage	Total Amount of the Value of Lands	Value of 1 H. of Land			
<u>A</u> Athens Brown	456	43	96	18	-	1	90

SPECIMEN FROM PITTSYLVANIA COUNTY 1797 LAND BOOK SHOWING SIZE OF TRACT CLASS OF LAND, ASSESSED VALUE AND TOTAL TAX AFTER 1815. LAND BOOKS ALSO RECORDED THE DIRECTION THE LAND LAY FROM THE COURTHOUSE AND THE DISTANCES THEREFROM

The many imperfections in this first issue of the PACKET serve as proof that INTERIM lacks the skills, experience and facilities to publish a Society quarterly that could even approach the quality of THE QUILL PEN. As was stated earlier, he is publishing this issue of the PITTSYLVANIA PACKET only. This was cheerfully done at the expense of his other research and writing projects because he felt it essential that a regular Society newsletter be continued.

The Society needs some one to take on this enjoyable and rewarding task immediately. It is a good way to evade a life of boredom.

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### USING THE PITTSYLVANIA COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICE?

The Society is always pleased to welcome home those of you with roots in PITTSYLVANIA COUNTY. You continue to come from ALABAMA, ARIZONA, CALIFORNIA, TEXAS, WYOMING, OKLAHOMA, KENTUCKY, ILLINOIS, OREGON, WEST VIRGINIA, ETC. to do genealogical study in the PITTSYLVANIA COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICE. The most eagerly sought after documents are the MARRIAGE RECORDS and this is as it should be. However, since you have come all that distance, why not take an hour or two more and search the DEED BOOKS for land ownership by your ancestors? Do not fail to search the LAND ENTRY BOOK and the OLD SURVEYS BOOKS for footprints of your antecedents.

Some researchers from out of state ignore the LAND BOOKS even though they can usually determine how much land an ancestor owned, the direction it lay from the COURT HOUSE, the distance therefrom, the taxable value of the land per acre, the value of the appurtenances, and the tax assessed. Frequently the marginal notes indicate the names of prior grantees. Others fail to check the REVOLUTIONARY WAR CLAIMS BOOK which contains items of enormous interest. PITTSYLVANIA COUNTY may have better records than any county on your itinerary. Make use of them!

## THE FIRST SESSION OF THE PITTSYLVANIA COURT

What was the most significant act decreed by the Gentlemen Justices of the Pittsylvania County Court in June of 1767 during that first term of court? One could argue that the appointment of William Tunstall as Clerk of the Court was their wisest decision. This remarkable man set a standard for the keeping of records that is perhaps unexcelled in the Commonwealth, if not in the entire U.S. His successors kept the faith and the result is a treasure for posterity.

Not including those in the City of Danville, what facility annually brings more out of state visitors into Pittsylvania County than any other?

Probable answer: The Pittsylvania County Clerk's Office.

VERBATUM ET LITTERATUM: WILL TUNSTALL.

### └─ A LATE ARRIVING QUERY ─┐

Just prior to going to press, the PACKET received the following:

DODSON

Would like to find parents, brothers, sisters, etc. of DIANNA DODSON who married 16 December 1799 to JAMES TARPLEY YATES in Pittsylvania County. Father might have been FORTUNOUS DODSON. Will share info.

YATES (Yeatts)

Interested in finding family of JAMES TARPLEY YATES (Yeatts) who married DIANNA DODSON (see above) Sons WILLIAM, JOHN and JIM came to Tenn. and Ky. Needs names of parents of James. Will share info.

Mrs Betty Humphrey  
RD 2 Box 204  
Clinton, Ky. 42031

### A TIMELY REMINDER TO ALL MEMBERS

Have you paid your dues? It would be helpful if you would do so at the meeting if not before.

## IN MEMORIAM

ROBERT CARRINGTON VADEB JR.

Rob Vaden had all those qualities that characterize a true gentleman. As a charter member of the Society he was an occasional contributor to the pages of THE QUILL PEN. The distinguished Vaden was a fine historian in his own right and generously gave of his rich store of county lore to any and all aspiring county historians. He understood the value of preservation and at considerable trouble and personal expense, he maintained for posterity his ancestor's old water-powered GALVESTON MILL on WHITETHORN CREEK. The Society has lost an irreplaceable.

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## RECOMMENDED READING

INTERIM has added to his bookshelf some publications by our own PITTSYLVANIA COUNTY historians.

NEIL and LUCILLE PAYNE'S transcription of PITTSYLVANIA COUNTY DEED BOOKS 1, 2 & 3 is rich in valuable history. The PAYNES have a few copies of this 215 page fully indexed volume still available at \$20 plus \$2.50 for postage and handling. This is a good buy!

ESTELLE IRONMONGER TYLER'S interesting and richly illustrated hard cover book is still available. THE JUNCTION ELBA - GREINA, VIRGINIA is loaded with not only Gretna history, but county history as well.

MARY LEIGH BOISSEAU'S fully indexed transcription of the VESTRY BOOK OF CAMDEN PARISH 1767 - 1820 is a must for any person with early ancestors in PITTSYLVANIA COUNTY.



# **PITTSYLVANIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY PUBLICATIONS**

*(Order from Mrs. V. M. Buck, P. O. Box 138, Chatham, VA 24531)*

**History of Pittsylvania County, Virginia** by Maud Carter Clement. THE history of the county, reprinted in hard cover. \$24 postpaid.

**Pittsylvania: Homes and People of the Past** by Madalene Fitzgerald. Photos, descriptions of scores of homes, priceless notes about former owners. Hard cover. \$20 postpaid.

**Eighteenth Century Landmarks of Pittsylvania County, Virginia** by Madalene Fitzgerald and Frances Hurt. Revised, completely indexed. Soft cover. \$12 postpaid.

**An Intimate History of the American Revolution in Pittsylvania County** by Frances Hurt. Many little-known family stories, scores of surnames, roster of Pittsylvania soldiers. Soft cover. \$12 postpaid.

**Footprints from the old Survey Books** by Roger Dodson. Land surveys of Halifax and Pittsylvania Counties. Thousands of names. Soft cover. \$12 postpaid.

**Gray's Map of Chatham, Virginia, 1878.** Rare, full-color print, suitable for framing. Many names and features. \$3.50 postpaid.

**Pittsylvania's Eighteenth Century Grist Mills** by Herman Melton. Histories of mills built in 1700's. Richly illustrated, indexed, hard cover. Over 300 family names appear. \$17 postpaid.

**Pittsylvania Packet**, Society periodical, free postpaid to members.

## **PITTSYLVANIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP FORM**

*(Please send to Mrs. A. H. Overbey, Treasurer, P. O. Box 374,  
Chatham, VA 24531)*

**Dues:** \$10 single, \$15 couple per year (starts in May). Dues include receiving the society's periodical publication.

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**City:** \_\_\_\_\_ **State:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Zip:** \_\_\_\_\_



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